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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [FR](#)
SUBJECT: FRANCE MID-EAST DIRECTOR ON PEACE PROCESS

Classified By: Acting Political Minister Counselor Andrew R. Young for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (S/NF) MFA Middle East Director (Assistant Secretary-equivalent) Patrice Paoli informed POL Minister Counselor June 18 that Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak told French officials in Paris June 15 that the Israelis have a "secret accord" with the USG to continue the "natural growth" of Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Paoli noted that the French anticipate strong Israeli resistance to USG pressure on this issue. He asked whether the USG has considered how to adapt to possible Israeli responses: "How will you react to Israeli reactions to your pressure?" He claimed that "the credibility of President Obama will be judged on the issue of settlements." MFA DAS Ludovic Pouille, who also attended the meeting, underlined this point: "Arabs are saying progress on settlements is crucial. Saudi Arabia and Egypt seem obsessed with the settlements issue; they won't even enter the game without progress on settlements." Paoli added that "negotiations can wait until the fall, but steps forward cannot wait until then." Both diplomats emphasized the need to build confidence measures on the ground now.

12. (S/NF) In stressing the energy with which the GOF plans to approach the peace process, Paoli said that France will not wait until all 27 EU members are in agreement before pressing ahead with their support of USG efforts. Pouille said the French can play an important role on "two key issues": working toward a settlements freeze and monitoring the implementation of an eventual agreement. By leaning on other countries in the European Union and within the Quartet to bring their resources to bear ("their diplomatic presence, their networks"), Paoli said that France hopes to contribute to pressing the parties forward as quickly as possible. Pouille stressed monitoring in particular, which he described as "a big hole at the Annapolis conference." He argued that "the US cannot be the only judge" of progress.

13. (S/NF) Paoli explained that President Sarkozy will have three messages to convey to Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu when they meet in Paris on June 24:

-- "You think you've got time, but you don't."
-- "You think you have an alternative solution, but you don't."
-- "You think you're stronger than the Palestinians, but you're not."

Paoli said that Sarkozy will stress that "there is a single door and it is imperative to move through it now." Paoli and Pouille both expressed disappointment with the reservations contained in Netanyahu's June 14 speech, but noted that it nonetheless reflected significant movement in the Likud position regarding a Palestinian state. "It's not easy to

reverse a campaign promise two months after the campaign," Paoli observed. They also said that President Obama's address in Cairo was extremely well received in France and in the Arab world. "It was a speech, though, and it was a received as a speech," Pouille said. "The reaction in the Arab world was: 'Now do it.'"

PEKALA